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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 120815345-3525-02]

RIN 0648-XF581

Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic; 2017 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for the South Atlantic Other Jacks Complex (Lesser Amberjack, Almaco Jack, and Banded Rudderfish)

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; closure.

SUMMARY: NMFS implements an accountability measure (AM) for the commercial sector for the Other Jacks Complex (lesser amberjack, almaco jack, and banded rudderfish) in the South Atlantic for the 2017 fishing year through this temporary rule. NMFS projects that commercial landings of the Other Jacks complex will reach their combined commercial annual catch limit (ACL) by August 4, 2017. Therefore, NMFS closes the commercial sector for this complex on August 4, 2017, through the remainder of the fishing year in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the

South Atlantic. This closure is necessary to protect the lesser amberjack, almaco jack, and banded rudderfish resources.

DATES: This rule is effective 12:01 a.m., local time, August 4, 2017, until 12:01 a.m., local time, January 1, 2018.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mary Vara, NMFS Southeast Regional Office, telephone: 727-824-5305, email: *mary.vara@noaa.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The snapper-grouper fishery of the South Atlantic includes lesser amberjack, almaco jack, and banded rudderfish, which combined are the Other Jacks Complex, and is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council and is implemented by NMFS under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

The combined commercial ACL for the Other Jacks Complex is 189,422 lb (85,920 kg), round weight. Under 50 CFR 622.193(1)(1)(i), NMFS is required to close the commercial sector for the Other Jacks Complex when the commercial ACL has been reached, or is projected to be reached, by filing a notification to that effect with the Office of the Federal

Register. NMFS has determined that the commercial sector for this complex is projected to reach its ACL by August 4, 2017. Therefore, this temporary rule implements an AM to close the commercial sector for the Other Jacks Complex in the South Atlantic, effective 12:01 a.m., local time, August 4, 2017.

The operator of a vessel with a valid commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper having lesser amberjack, almaco jack, or banded rudderfish on board must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such species prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, August 4, 2017. During the closure, the recreational bag limit specified in 50 CFR 622.187(b)(8) and the possession limits specified in 50 CFR 622.187(c) apply to all harvest or possession of lesser amberjack, almaco jack, or banded rudderfish in or from the South Atlantic EEZ. These recreational bag and possession limits apply in the South Atlantic on board a vessel for which a valid Federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued, regardless of whether such species were harvested in state or Federal waters. During the closure, the sale or purchase of lesser amberjack, almaco jack, or banded rudderfish taken from the EEZ is prohibited.

Classification

The Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, has determined this temporary rule is necessary for the conservation and management of the fish in the Other Jacks Complex, a component of the South Atlantic snapper-grouper fishery, and is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable laws.

This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.193(1)(1)(i) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

These measures are exempt from the procedures of the Regulatory Flexibility Act because the temporary rule is issued without opportunity for prior notice and public comment.

This action responds to the best scientific information available. The Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries (AA) finds that the need to immediately implement this action to close the commercial sector for the Other Jacks Complex constitutes good cause to waive the requirements to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b)(B), as such procedures are unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule implementing the AM itself has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the closure. Such procedures

are contrary to the public interest because of the need to immediately implement this action to protect the Other Jacks Complex since the capacity of the fishing fleet allows for rapid harvest of the commercial ACL. Prior notice and opportunity for public comment would require time and would potentially result in a harvest well in excess of the established commercial ACL.Comm

For the aforementioned reasons, the AA also finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the effectiveness of this action under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 31, 2017.

Emily H. Menashes.

Acting Director,

Office of Sustainable Fisheries,

National Marine Fisheries Service.